

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Deputy Under Secretary
G/PM

REVIEWED BY

RDS ☐ or XDC EXT. DATE
TS AUTH.

EMPLOYED October 27, 1962 (S)

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RELEASE DOWNTOWN

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7
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TOP SECRET

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: The Military Significance of Soviet
Missile Bases in Cuba

1. The presence of 24 1,020 n.m. MRBM launchers and 12 or 16 2,200 n.m. IREM launchers in Cuba provides a significant accretion to Soviet strategic capabilities for striking the continental United States. In view of the relatively limited numbers of Soviet operational ICBM launchers--at present an estimated 75--the missiles in the Caribbean will increase the first-strike missile salvo which the USSR could place on targets in the continental United States by over 40 percent.

2. At present, 20 of the 24 MRBM launchers are believed to be fully operational, and the remaining four will be within a few days. The first 4 IREM launchers will probably reach an emergency capability on November 15, and full operational status on December 1. The 8 other confirmed IREM launchers will probably reach emergency capability by December 1, and be fully operational by December 15. An additional four IREM launchers will probably be completed, but it is possible that the quarantine has stopped them. The current threat is thus 24 MRBMs; by December it will--unless construction is effectively stopped within a month--be augmented by at least 12 and up to 16 IREMs. Each launcher is assumed to have the standard two missiles, allowing one reload (for refire in 4-6 hours). In at least one of the nine bases more missiles than launchers have been positively confirmed, and in general the number of identified MRBM missiles at least is sufficient to man all the launchers for an initial strike. Earth-covered bunkers suitable for storage or check-out of nuclear weapons are under rapid construction, and at least two of them now appear to be complete. There is one such bunker for each pair of launch sites.

3. The strategic significance of the Cuban missile complex is due not only to the substantial quantitative increase in megatons deliverable in a surprise first strike, but also by their effect on the US deterrent striking force. Approximately 40 percent of the SAC bomber force is now located on air bases within range of Soviet MRBMs in Cuba, and almost all of it is in range of the IREMs. If the present base complex in Cuba is completed late in 1962 and taking into account the estimated Soviet ICBM force for the end of 1962, a Soviet attack without warning could destroy an appreciably larger proportion of over-all United States strategic capability than it could if the Cuban complex were not included.

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The number of US weapons surviving and ready to retaliate on targets in the USSR would be decreased by about 30 percent, and would thus leave only about 15 percent of the number in our pre-attack force. This force could still cause considerable destruction in a US retaliatory strike, the Soviets could not rely on the degree of surprise assumed in the above calculation, and it is very unlikely that the Soviets would be tempted toward resort to war by the change in the military balance. Nonetheless, this represents a serious dilution of US strategic deterrent capability.

4. The reasons for the strategic significance of the Cuban bases are: (a) the size of the Soviet ICBM force does not allow coverage of SAC bomber bases and soft ICBM sites; the addition of the MRBM/IRBM force already on the island of Cuba does permit coverage of all such points, thus bringing under fire an additional 26 US ICBMs and over 100 B-47's; (b) the Cuban based missile systems have high reliability (80 percent), accuracy (1 to 1.5 n.m. CEP), and warhead yield (up to 3 megatons each for the MRBMs, and up to 5 megatons for the IRBMs); (c) the United States does not have BMEWs or other early warning radar on the southern approaches; and (d) as taken into account earlier, many SAC bomber bases are concentrated in the South and Midwest.

5. All of the discussion above is concerned with the missile complex now being completed in Cuba. There is no reason why the Soviets could not, if unimpeded by an effective quarantine, literally multiply the number of launchers to a force large enough to threaten the entire strategic balance of power. The Soviets have deployed over 500 MRBMs and IRBMs on their own territory, and the lesser cost compared to ICBMs would make a major expansion in Cuba very attractive.

Raymond L. Garthoff
Special Assistant for Soviet Bloc,
Office of Politico-Military Affairs

DRAFT FOLLOWS

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE
DEPUTY UNDERSECRETARY
G/IN

CONFIDENTIAL

(TOP SECRET ATTACHMENT)

October 26, 1962

MEMORANDUM

TO: G - Mr. U. Alexis Johnson

FROM: G/IN - Jeffrey C. Kitchen *JK*

SUBJECT: Military Importance of the Soviet Missile Bases in Cuba

The attached memoranda have been written at my request by Ray Garthoff. One, at the Top Secret level, sets forth the military significance of the missile bases for the guidance of senior Department officers. The second is an unclassified version, in which IC has indicated an active interest for background use by USUN, and which may be useful also for USIA, S, and for guidance of senior officers in discussion with outside contacts. The objectives of US diplomacy have been taken into account in framing it.

Attachments.

- (1) The Military Significance of the Soviet
Missile Bases in Cuba (Top Secret)
- (2) The Military Significance of the Soviet
Missile Bases in Cuba (Unclassified)

Concurrence: INR - Mr. Hilsman *RH*
DOB/ISA - Mr. Rowan *DR*

Shelby

KZ
G/IN:RGGarthoff:pop

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

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October 26, 1962

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: The Military Significance of the Soviet
Missile Bases in Cuba

1. The presence of 24 1,020 n.m. IRBM launchers and 12 or 16 2,200 n.m. IRBM launchers in Cuba provides a significant accretion to Soviet strategic capabilities for striking the continental United States. In view of the relatively limited numbers of Soviet operational ICBM launchers at present an estimated 75 the missiles in the Caribbean will increase the first-strike missile salvo which the USSR could place on targets in the continental United States by over 40 percent. b(1)

2. At present, 20 of the 24 IRBM launchers are believed to be fully operational, and the remaining four will be within a few days. The 12 confirmed IRBM launchers will probably reach emergency capability by December 1, and be fully operational by December 15. An additional four IRBM launchers will probably be completed, but it is possible that the quarantine has stopped them. The current threat is thus 24 IRBMs; in December it will--unless construction is effectively stopped within a month--be augmented by at least 12 and up to 16 IRBMs. Each launcher is assumed to have the standard two missiles, allowing one reload (for refire in 4 - 6 hours). In at least one of the nine bases more missiles than launchers have been positively confirmed, and in general the number of identified IRBM missiles at least is sufficient to man all the launchers for an initial strike. Earth covered bunkers suitable for storage or check-out of nuclear weapons are under rapid construction, and at least two of them now appear to be complete. There is one such bunker for each pair of launch sites.

3. The strategic significance of the Cuban missile complex is due not only to the substantial quantitative increase in megatons deliverable in a surprise first strike, but also by their effect on the US deterrent striking force. Approximately 40 percent of the SAC bunker force is now located on air bases within range of Soviet IRBMs in Cuba, and almost all of it is in range of the IRBMs. If the present base complex in Cuba is completed late in 1962, and taking into account the estimated Soviet ICBM force for the end of 1962, a Soviet attack without warning could destroy an appreciably larger proportion of over-all US strategic capability than it could if the Cuban complex were not included.

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b(1) [The number of US weapons surviving and ready to retaliate on targets in the USSR would be decreased by about 30 percent, and would thus leave only about 15 percent of the number in our pre-attack force. This force could still cause considerable destruction in a US retaliatory strike, the Soviets could not rely on the degree of surprise assured in the above calculation, and it is very unlikely that the Soviets would be tempted toward resort to war by the change in the military balance. Nonetheless, this represents a serious dilution of US strategic deterrent capability.]

b(1) 4. The reasons for the strategic significance of the Cuban bases are: (a) the size of the Soviet ICBM force does not allow coverage of SAC bomber bases and soft ICBM sites; the addition of the IRBM/IRBM force already on the island of Cuba does permit coverage of all such points, thus bringing under fire an additional 25 US ICBMs and over 100 B-47's; (b) the Cuban based missile systems have high reliability (30 percent), accuracy (1 to 1.5 n.m. CEP), and warhead yield (up to 3 megatons each for the IRBMs, and up to 5 megatons for the IRBMs); (c) the United States does not have BMEs or other early warning radar on the southern approaches; and (d) as taken into account earlier, many SAC bomber bases are concentrated in the South and Midwest.

b(1) 5. All of the discussion above is concerned with the missile complex now being completed in Cuba. There is no reason why the Soviets could not, if unimpeded by an effective quarantine, literally multiply the number of launchers to a force large enough to threaten the entire strategic balance of power. The Soviets have deployed 500 IRBMs and IRBMs on their own territory, and the lesser cost compared to ICBMs would make a major expansion in Cuba very attractive.

Raymond L. Garthoff
Raymond L. Garthoff
Special Assistant for Soviet Bloc,
Office of Politico-Military Affairs

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EXCISE ②

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE
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October 26, 1962

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: The Military Significance of the Soviet
Missile Bases in Cuba

1. The presence of 1,020 n.m. ICBM launchers and 2,200 n.m. ICBM launchers in Cuba provides a significant accretion to Soviet strategic capabilities for striking the continental United States. In view of the relatively limited numbers of Soviet operational ICBM launchers, the missiles in the Caribbean will increase the first-strike missile salvo which the USSR could place on targets in the continental United States by over 40 percent. b(1) b(1)

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Raymond L. Garthoff
Raymond L. Garthoff
Special Assistant for Soviet Bloc,
Office of Politico-Military Affairs

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